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A SYMPOSIUM
ON THE VALUE OF HUMANISTIC, PARTICULARLY CLASSICAL,
STUDIES AS A PREPARATION FOR THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY,
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PROFESSION ¹

I. THE PLACE OF LATIN AND GREEK IN THE PREPARATION
FOR THE MINISTRY

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I count it a matter of great importance that this Conference has been invited to discuss the question how the study of Greek and Latin is related to preparation for the Christian ministry. It is true that indeed the classical department in our schools and colleges deeply affects the whole character and level, the tone and quality of the general education of our people; for it is still held by a very large number of men whose opinion we cannot afford to ignore, that ultimately the best culture of any modern nation must rest upon the basis of Greek and Latin history

¹ Through the kind assistance of the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan and the courtesy of the publishers of the *School Review*, it has been possible to secure some reprints of this symposium for distribution. Those desiring a copy may address (inclosing a two-cent stamp for postage) Mr. LOUIS P. JOCELYN, Secretary Michigan Schoolmaster's Club, South Division St., Ann Arbor, Mich. The symposium upon "The Value of Humanistic, particularly Classical Studies as a Preparation for the Study of Medicine and Engineering," at the Conference of 1906, was published in the *School Review*, Vol. XIV (1906), pp. 389-414; and that upon "The Value of Humanistic Studies as a Preparation for the Study of Law," at the Conference of 1907, in the same journal, Vol. XV (1907), pp. 409-35. The symposium of 1906 was translated into German by Professor Von Arnim, of the University of Vienna, and was published, with an interesting introduction by Dr. S. Frankfurter, under the title "Der Wert des Humanismus, insbesondere der klassischen Studien als Vorbereitung für das Studium der Medizin und der Ingenieurkunde vom Standpunkt der Berufe" (4. Heft, Mitteilungen des Vereins der Freunde des humanistischen Gymnasiums, Vienna and Leipzig, 1907).

At the Classical Conference of 1909 there will be a symposium on "The Value of the Study of Latin and Greek as a Training for Men of Affairs."

and literature. Apart from that wide topic, it must be confessed that the study of these things has a direct relation to the leading professions which is of the utmost importance to the dignity and power of those professions. But, above all, as we shall see, the relation of Greek and Latin to the Christian ministry is so intimate and so organic that it is no exaggeration to assert that the way in which it is measured and handled by the colleges and seminaries will practically settle the future intellectual influence of the Christian pulpit.

It is scarcely possible, then, to discuss our subject without asking ourselves, first of all, what is the function of the ministry? There are those who maintain that it is possible to carry on the ministry of the gospel without a classical training, and in proof of this position it is possible to name many persons who have occupied and occupy prominent positions as Christian preachers, and who have brought many souls into the Christian experience, who are entirely innocent of Latin and Greek. It must be admitted quite frankly that for the specific work of evangelism such a training cannot be proved to be essential. We must also recognize that many very useful pastorates have been carried on by men without that kind and level of education. But we must be all the more careful, when these facts have been admitted, to realize what relation the ministry sustains to the life of the church as a whole, and, through that, to the general life and culture of the entire nation. For religion is no mere secluded section of human life. It arises and it lives, it fights its battles and wins or loses them in close contact and struggle with all the other forces and institutions of a civilized life. It does not continue its existence and influence by mere spontaneity. It requires and demands the exercise of the highest functions of human nature, of imagination as well as faith, of the disciplined mind as well as the purified heart. As truly as it demands the secret agonies of repentance, it demands also the outward glories of public worship and the concrete burdens of human service. Religion never will come to its own unless it leads all the other interests and forces of civilized man. It is all or nothing, it is supreme or least among the complex conditions of human experi-

ence. It carries in its life and heart absolute authority, or its voice is a mockery and its claims a superstition.

The Christian religion maintains its life through the continual assertion of its nature as the supreme self-revelation of God, and as carrying in itself a supreme authority over the conscience and the will of all human beings. It seeks—by its very nature it must die or seek—to make its spirit effective in the midst of all human interests. It must meet every strain which is brought to bear upon its fundamental claims. This the Christian religion cannot do in the face of the modern world except through men who are trained for a task sublime as this task. Whoever these are, they must stand to the community as the chief representatives of the Christian faith, its spokesmen, its advocates, its intelligent teachers, its confident promulgators. They must be men who are able to face the deepest things which Christianity may fear, and the deepest things which Christianity may do, among the wayward minds and the wayworn hearts of men. Moreover, such men as these must stand in every community. For it is not at a distance, by mere printing of elaborate arguments and dealing with scholarly situations that this supremacy of the Christian gospel is to be maintained. This work can only be done through the lives of men in contact with the lives of men. This religion cannot be content with mere formal acquiescence, with mere outward conformity to its routine practices. It must seek by its very nature to penetrate every section of the country with all its influence, that it may bring every individual to all his perfection. And in every section of a civilized land the same battle must be engaged in as in every other section. The educated are everywhere, the disputers of this world are in every hamlet and side street of all this vast country. There is no place where it is safe to say that Christianity can be successfully maintained unless it is fully represented by those who know its nature and manifest its power both in their word and in their life.

If these things are true, then they may be summed up in the blunt statement that the Christian religion cannot possibly retain moral and social leadership if its ministers lack an intellectual equipment which is equal to that required by any calling in the

most highly civilized regions of the world. The idea that Christianity can conquer by means of men who do not know what mental discipline is, who hope to maintain their influence by a piety that is divorced from intelligence, or a message that is delivered by intellectual incompetents, is one of the most disastrous which any generation could inherit or cherish. The ministry must have its schools in which work must be as severe as in any other professional school in the land. The pulpits must be occupied by men who have given themselves to specific and technical preparation with as deep self-sacrifice, with as real diligence, as those who hope to occupy the front places in medicine or in law or in education.

It is in the light of this whole view of the ministry and of its preparation that I must approach the specific task which your committee has assigned to me. What place, then, shall the study of Greek and Latin occupy in the preparation for the ministry?

First as to Greek. The Christian religion not merely arose out of the Hebrew religion (and therefore every theological student ought to *wish* to know a *little* Hebrew), but in a world whose intellectual life was deeply saturated with the influences of the Greek language and literature. Greek, in fact, was the *lingua franca* of the world at that time, and hence we find that the writings of the New Testament are all preserved to us in that language. Traditions that one or more originally existed in Aramaic are probably true, but the originals are entirely lost, so necessary was it that if they were to gain permanent place and influence they should be promptly translated and circulated as Greek documents. Even those apostolic letters which were addressed to the church in Rome itself and to that other church in the Roman colony of Philippi were in the Greek language. It is further to be noted that early Christian literature emanating from the city of Rome was not in Latin, but in Greek—as witness the Epistle of the Roman Clement. It has on apparently good grounds been concluded that down to the latter half of the second century the language used in the life and worship of the Christian church at Rome was not Latin, but Greek.

Many problems have always been felt to exist regarding the

kind of Greek which we find in the New Testament literature. It is not until very recent days that material has been found for an approximate answer to that question; but it is becoming clearer every year, through a closer study of inscriptions and from writings disintombed in Egypt, that the Greek which is used in this New Testament is not merely Attic Greek modified or degraded, but is the vernacular Greek of that period. The first preachers of the gospel of Christ, by the divine instinct which has lived ever since in the church, especially in its great periods of missionary activity, addressed themselves directly to the people in the language which the people knew and used. The clearing-up of some of these facts has added new zest to the scholarly investigation of this aspect of the Greek language, and may throw new light upon various aspects of New Testament study.

In all this the older apologists used to see the work of a divine providence. In the fulness of time, it was said, God sent his Son into the world, and that fulness, that fitness of all the circumstances, included this fashioning and perfecting of a language better adapted to record and express the Christian facts and truths than any other which the world had known. If many of us cannot today, with the same conscientious confidence, insist upon that argument as a piece of apologetics, we can yet recognize the actual and living importance for the Christian religion of the fact that, through its origin and permanent connection with the Greek language, it was brought into a living connection with the whole marvelous literature of the Greeks. It is one of the most significant of all facts that when this religion began to take its place in the larger life of the Graeco-Roman world, and when its theologians were compelled to face the fundamental intellectual problems which it presented, then, as at the present day, they found in that most highly developed philosophical language of antiquity keen weapons ready to their hand.

It follows from all these facts that the thorough investigation of the New Testament in its history and meanings must forever rest on a knowledge of the Greek language. He who knows it not is shut off from a personal consideration of the deepest problems concerning the origins of the faith which he professes.

To turn now to the Latin language, we must observe that toward the end of the second century, in Northern Africa there arose that fierce Christian spirit, Tertullian of Carthage. He it was who really began the history of Latin Christian literature, and in his rugged paragraphs and sometimes tumultuous vocabulary we seem to feel the burden of the task laid upon the beginners of that history. It is no easy thing to adapt a language to a view of human nature and its eternal relations, which is so vast, so subtle, so complex as the Christian view. It requires time, even as the missionaries of today discover, to refashion the great words of any language that they may move, as it were, at home in the universe which is opened by the Christian faith for the human spirit. From that time forth, Latin gradually and rapidly became the official language of the church, and the great theologies came to be written in that tongue. As the Roman Empire, now with the church at its heart, spread over Europe, it carried, for all the purposes of church and of state, the Latin language with it. It is true that in Southern Europe—nay, even in Italy itself—the real Latin disappeared and was replaced by the various vernacular tongues, which, in their turn and at a much later period, had to be reconquered for the purposes both of literature and of religion. But down to the time of the Reformation, Latin continued to be the prevailing language in the higher life of all civilized peoples in Europe. In that tongue they wrote their science and their philosophy, they carried on the amenities and the burdens of diplomacy and government, they recorded their biographies and histories. In that tongue they taught all the peoples to say their prayers and to build their theologies. This language it was which became the instrument for the keen dialectics of scholasticism and much of the deep-souled music of mysticism.

When the Renaissance arose, there was a rediscovery of the ancient literature of Greece, and over Europe it spread its flowers and its song, breaking in upon the monotony of the heavier tongue of the Latins with its lissome grace, its keen discriminations, and its close-knit vigor. But the Renaissance was accompanied by the Reformation. The Reformation brought about a

still greater change in the uses of language, for the effort was made to give the Scriptures to the peoples of Europe in their own tongues—the language of the home and the street and the market-place. In spite of this strenuous missionary effort, which, of course, began soon to produce its appointed results in the great literatures of those modern tongues, the discussions of the theologians continued to be conducted in the Latin language. Hence it is that so large a part of the theology of the Reformation period is inaccessible to those who are unable to use this language, while many of the most important aspects of ecclesiastical as of secular history in all the Christian centuries lie beyond their reach.

In view of all these facts, it seems almost needless to assert that no one can move easily in the region of theological discussion nor read very far into the history of the Christian church to whom the simplest Latin is utterly unknown. I know that there are those who feel persuaded that, through translations of the Scriptures and through reading of modern theological books, they can obtain all that is necessary for the conduct of their ministry. That depends entirely upon what their ideal is. There are deep and curious psychological results produced by ignorance as well as knowledge, and many paltry and viewless paths are trod because a man has to avoid certain topics and cannot enter upon certain courses of reading which he would naturally have entered upon if he had possessed even a little better equipment. The tendency, as I believe, of those who do not possess these weapons of a full Christian culture must ever be to read what is easier, to avoid those greater works which confront one on so many of their pages with words printed in Greek or with quotations from Latin, with references to phases of history which only they are likely to know who have studied Greek and Greek history, Latin and the history of Rome. Thus, as I believe, the lack of Greek and Latin does of itself tend to lower the general authority of that portion of the ministry which is without them. Many a question the young college men in their churches could ask which must bring the blush to their faces because they know not these two things. Many an address must be made which

shall be poorer because they cannot speak with confidence on points which a very little Latin or Greek would enable them to determine with somewhat of authority.

I am aware of the possible argument that we cannot expect the average minister to be a thorough classical scholar. And I admit at once that the average ability may not be high enough for such excellence, the average diligence may be unequal to its maintenance, and the average tasks may interfere much with its constant cultivation. But, on the other hand, I may urge a view of the matter which I think affords basis for a complete answer to that difficulty. It is ever idle to discuss a concrete situation in terms of an impossible ideal, and I wish today above all to be practical.

If anyone will look calmly and without prejudice over the field of work which is being carried on by those churches in this or other lands which insist that every minister shall have learned some Greek and Latin, he will find that as a result there are various grades of attainment in these languages and that each of these has its real value and function. First, there are those whose acquaintance with and taste for classical learning is such that they are fitted to become specialists in this region. For them it is possible to do original work in the investigation of sources, in the discussion of minute linguistic problems, in the discrimination of one Greek usage from another, in the power to date a Latin document by the quality of the Latin. The church needs this kind of work for its large and varied life, and hence it must continue to call upon the preparatory schools and colleges to prepare such men for its service. I fear that we in this country hardly realize how much opportunity there is in this direction, and how great a leeway American scholarship needs to make up. One is glad to be able to say that in recent years much work of the best kind has been done at some American institutions by our younger scholars in this field. It is a mistake to suppose that there is no fresh ground to break either in biblical study or in the general field of church history. The discovery of ancient manuscripts of all kinds, the closer co-ordination of various fields of investigation, in economics as well as politics, in the minutiae

of literary scrutiny as well as in the measuring of large movements of thought, is adding fresh light to our understanding both of the institutional history of the church and of the significance of its great doctrinal discussions. Much of this work can only be done by those who are trained philologists and who bring to the investigation of history the expert linguist's tastes as well as the grasp of the philosopher and the insight of the religious man.

In the second place, we must, however, remember that there is a place for that much larger number of men whose tastes are somewhat different, who are able and glad to acquire a reading knowledge of the classical languages without concentrating attention upon the grammarian's interests. Here there is a wide range of possibility—from the man who reads any Latin and Greek with ease, and prefers to do all his work in the original, down to the man who reads them faithfully but with difficulty, who, therefore, depends largely upon translations, but who, when he comes to critical decisions, is careful always to compare the translations with the original. There are great varieties of power between these two extremes, and a very large amount of the best work in several theological departments, biblical, historical, and theological, is today being done by those who have this equipment in some one of its varying degrees. And one must recognize that this is necessary, for there are various departments of theological investigation which require the use of quite other languages, which take men into the study of other periods than those covered by Greek and Latin writings. In cases like these, expert use of the classical tongues is not easily maintained. They grow rusty, translate laboriously, and feel that they are losing time if they depend merely upon their own slow progress through the pages of their authors. For such men the use of translations is not only allowable but necessary, and some of the most important books in many fields have come from such scholars. I believe that a far larger number of our ministers ought to belong to some grade in this class. If they have had the foundations well laid in school and college, if they have been inspired in the seminary to cultivate the use of Latin and Greek in preparation

for their classroom work, if they have formed a habit of frequently reading even a little in those languages, of never depending merely upon translations but, where possible, of exercising themselves in direct and personal translation and, at important points, checking the best translators by comparison with the original, they will not only maintain through life a reasonable knowledge of the classical tongues but will thereby be able to go to the fountain-heads of philosophical and theological history for themselves. They need not merely depend upon interpretations and reports of other scholars, but may have that noble joy of comparing these directly and personally with those ancient writers who are under discussion.

But there is a third class, consisting of those who have never gained a power of reading the classics easily; but who, being faithful and diligent men, gained their degree in both languages. They realize the great advantage of the measure of knowledge they have won. They rejoice that quotations from Latin, and Greek references to classical literature and history, are not all "blind" to them. Such men will rejoice to have on their shelves the best modern commentaries on both the Old and the New Testaments. They will ever keep up the study of the New Testament by the use of commentaries which treat the Greek text. They will rejoice to get as close to the originals as they can, and will be stimulated to buy books that deal directly with the sources. This measure of scholarship and ideal of practice is within the easy reach of practically every minister in the land. It is by no means to be despised. It is a measure of power which sets a man far beyond all his brethren who, however naturally able or pious, are without the knowledge which he possesses of these languages. The least in the kingdom of God is greater than all those without, and he who is able to use Greek and Latin in the degree I have described occupies always, in discussion, and in the consultation of books, and in the judgment of controversies, a position such as even abler men cannot hold, whose minds are dead to these languages. I cannot strongly enough insist upon this point because, while it is the lowest part of the ideal I am setting before you, it is one which brings within every minister's

reach whole ranges of theological work which otherwise he would never think of reading. It is safe to say that there is hardly one, for instance, of the excellent series of International Commentaries which does not imply some knowledge of Greek and Latin. Even translated commentaries on the New Testament, like that of Meyer, imply the power to turn the pages of the Greek Testament. No man can fruitfully read the translation of Harnack's *History of Dogma* who does not know these languages. He cannot follow the discussions on the authorship of the New Testament books, the history of New Testament times, without feeling at every step his deficiencies if he is unable to refer to the quotations or to follow even sparse references to Greek and Latin words. The tendency for such a man must always be to purchase and read books which belong to the more ephemeral class—those which are avowedly popular, whether in exposition or in theological discussion. His mind moves, therefore, always on smooth waters, and goes surely and easily to sleep. His imagination is unenkindled by the rugged struggle with big problems. His faith is unbraced by conscious facing of the strongest winds of criticism. A large number of weaklings in the pulpit are men who might have become strong and vigorous in their intellectual and spiritual life, if their equipment had been sufficient to make them appreciate the important works, to buy one first-class commentary rather than three or four commonplace productions of respectable piety. Men like these are the victims of every wind of doctrine that blows in any direction. Some of them take refuge in the arid regions of narrowness, of a conservatism that is bitter because uninstructed. Or else they yield themselves to the flatulent food of the latest fad, if only the writer of a book or a series of books is possessed of a smooth style and great self-confidence, if only he uses the word "new" for his philosophy or his psychology or his theology, if only he insists often enough and subtly enough that he who does not see these things does not see anything at all. What we need today in our ministry is a great body of men who know enough of the past to understand the real problems of the present. And we cannot have such a body of men unless they are willing to

make the sacrifices of toil and patient study to acquire those languages which will open the most important discussions of the past and the present to their eyes.

I feel, of course, with you all, not only that this ideal is necessary, but that it is difficult to attain. I have heard, not so long ago, of ministers, in conversation with theological students, who sneered at the amount of attention which was demanded by their teachers to the languages of Scripture and Christian history, saying that *they* had been in the ministry for so many years and had not found these things at all necessary. The down-drag of a low ideal, when it exists throughout a vast body of men, is a very powerful force and one which it is extremely difficult to counteract. It will take long to spread through the churches of America—nay, even throughout the ministry of America—the ideals of ministerial scholarship which I have so briefly and slightly sketched above. For the better day that is coming we must depend very largely upon the spirit which emanates from the classical teachers in our schools and colleges, and the methods which are employed in our theological seminaries. I believe that one of the greatest forces which can be employed by teachers in public schools to induce boys to begin the study of classics and to carry it on enthusiastically, is continually, freshly, interestingly, to argue and to prove and to illustrate the position that the study of classics is necessary, not merely for a noble general culture, but for definite and professional power in the great careers of life. Among these careers not only statesmanship and law and medicine and education, but the ministry of the church of Christ must be named. It ought not to be hard for any teacher of Latin or Greek in any high school in the country to get sufficient grasp of the relation of his language to these professions to enable him thus to influence his scholars, to make them feel that these are not dead but ever-living languages, not useless lumber but the living fountain of fresh inspirations, and that no nation can, in its culture, in its statesmanship, in its professional careers, stand in the front rank which does not, through these languages, relate itself to the greatest achievements of the past.

What is said here of the school must apply all the more

powerfully to the college. I believe that the sources of supply for the ministry can be opened by the spirit of the college professors of America. It is absolutely certain that in college many men lose an earlier desire to enter the ministry, and this through the mere fact that the ministry as an ideal form of human service and as an obligation of the higher life does not seem to have the respect of their teachers. I think that colleges and universities where the truly broad spirit reigns may, without any loss of self-respect, without any taint of sectarian spirit, so arrange its courses, so make suggestions to those who are looking forward to the ministry, as to encourage such men to undertake fields of study that will fit them for their future work in the seminary and in the church. By this I do not mean that any seminary work should be done at college. Attempts to do it have, as a rule, proved a failure. And in any case the man who looks forward to the ministry ought to take the broadest and strongest college course which is possible. But undoubtedly there are departments of study which those looking forward to the ministry ought to pursue, when we take the broad view of the ministry which I have suggested today. I believe that Latin and Greek ought to be studied by such men through the whole four years of their college course, so that, having had eight years in these languages, they can go to the seminary able to use them with some degree of comfort, and able to appreciate their value as soon as they enter upon biblical study and the investigations of church history. And in the seminary these languages ought to be used. No year should pass in which the men are not encouraged to read in the Greek Testament and the Greek Fathers, as well as in Latin theology. Thus eleven years of work ought to send the average man out into the ministry of America with an equipment which shall give him a position in every community he enters, as a man of sound education, of real and thorough preparation for his great career.

I trust that, as a teacher of theology, I am not deaf to the clamant voices which appeal to us for men who are trained to meet a living situation and to deal with the often crushing burdens of our modern world. It is in the very name of those

voices, with their pathos in my heart, that I yearn for a ministry in our land which stands high enough to measure, and is strong enough to grapple with their task. Ultimately a nation is made by its ideals, and social wrongs are permanently corrected, not by superficial rearrangement of outer things, but by deep regenerations of spirit and desire. What we need is the leadership of men upon whom the Christian view of God and the world has shed its light. It is no child's play, it is no idler's listless and perfunctory work, it is a trained man's life-work to make that Christian view and the experience which lies behind it prevail in his own character that it may prevail over the character of his flock and over the history of a nation. The minister of the Christian religion is, alike by the nature of that religion and the nature of his own relation to it, committed to the position of leadership in the community. Woe to the man who undertakes it with mind untrained and will unbraced for a life of intellectual and spiritual labor! But blessed is the nation and secure is its future whose ministry is composed of men who, to the zeal of the evangelist, and the sacrifice of the pulpit, and the practical wisdom of the leader, add the wisdom and the sacrifice and the zeal of the trained teacher. Today the church of Christ needs men possessed of all these gifts and acquirements, possessed even of that culture "to make reason and the will of God prevail" amid the free and tumultuous life of our modern world.

II. THE VALUE TO THE CLERGYMAN OF TRAINING IN THE CLASSICS

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The other night, in company with an eminent expert in social problems, I had the privilege of hearing Mr. Post lecture on the witch's work that the railroads are making with our political institutions. As we left the building, the first unmistakable breath of spring in the air brought with it a sudden, disquieting flood of recollections of my home in the Virginia mountains, and